

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01 EB-07 DODE-00 SSC-01 L-03
H-01 /059 W

-----171618Z 041134 /45

P 162300Z MAY 77

FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 995

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMCONSUL TORONTO

S E C R E T QUEBEC 0191

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: LEVESQUE SETS NON-DATE FOR REFERENDUM

1. RENE LEVESQUE ANNOUNCED TO PRESS YESTERDAY THAT CABINET HAS SET "APPROXIMATE DATE" FOR QUEBEC "SOVEREIGNTIST-ASSOCIATION" REFERENDUM. MEETING OVER WEEKEND IN SECLUSION OF FISHING CAMP IN LAURENTIAN PARK, CABINET REPORTEDLY REVIEWED ITS FIRST 6 MONTHS PERFORMANCE AND DISCUSSED STRATEGY FOR FUTURE. ABOUT A QUARTER OF 17 HOUR WORKING SESSIONS WERE DEVOTED TO REFERENDUM.

2. REFUSING TO DISCLOSE CHOSEN TIMING, LEVESQUE JOCLARLY INDICATED PROCESS OF ELIMINATION WOULD NARROW PROBABLE TIMING TO PERIOD BETWEEN FALL OF 1978 AND SPRING OF 1980. AS PM SAID, REFERENDUM LIKELY

FOLLOW FEDERAL GENERAL ELECTION, WHICH IS ANTICIPATED NEXT YEAR, AND PRECEDE NEXT PROVINCIAL ELECTION, WHICH WILL PROBABLY BE HELD IN 1980 OR, AT LATEST, IN SPRING OF 1981.

3. IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN DISCUSSION EVIDENTLY WAS PRESENT DEPRESSED STATE OF ECONOMY, HOW IT AFFECTS PQ POLITICAL AMBITIONS AND WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS. LEVESQUE TACITLY

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ACKNOWLEDGED HIS GOVERNMENT'S PREOCCUPATION WITH INTRACTABLE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THEIR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS BY INDICATING IN DEFENSIVE MANNER THAT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS CONTROL OF ALL THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUMENTS OF ECONOMIC CONTROL.

4. FOLLOWING MEETING THERE HAS BEEN MUCH SPECULATION IN QUEBEC OF POSSIBLE CHANGES LEVESQUE MAY MAKE IN CABINET. HE ANNOUNCED

THAT TWO NEW MEMBERS WILL BE ADDED IN NEAR FUTURE TO TAKE
ON RESPONSIBILITIES OF MINISTERS WHO CARRY MORE THAN ONE PORTFOLIO.
"LE DEVOIR" OF MAY 18 SUGGESTED JOCELYNE OUELETTE OF HULL AND
PIERRE MARC JOHNSON OF ANJOU AS PROBABLE CANDIDATES.

5. COMMENT: MORE EXTENSIVE CHANGES IN CABINET MAY BE COMING
AFTER SUMMER RECESS. PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNEVEN
WITH MUCH HESITANCY AND SIGNS OF LACK OF COORDINATION. MENTIONED
FREQUENTLY AS PRIME CANDIDATES FOR DISMISSAL ARE: MINLABOR AND
IMMIGRATION CLOTURE; MINSOCIAL AFFAIRS LAZURE; MINTRANSPORT
AND PUBLIC WORKS LESSARD; AND MINCOM AND IND TREMBLAY. ORIGINAL
CABINET WAS CHOSEN WITH GEOGRAPHY DISTRIBUTION, IDEOLOGY,
AND PAST SERVICE IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AS PRIMARY BASIS FOR SELECTION.
TECHNICAL COMPETENCE AND EXPERIENCE WERE SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS
IN ALL BUT A FEW APPOINTMENTS. THUS, CHANGES WERE EXPECTED AFTER
AN INITIAL SHAKE DOWN PERIOD. HIGH EXPECTATIONS INDUCED BY
ORIGINAL BUILDUP AS QUEBEC CABINET OF CENTURY HAVE LED TO SOME
DISAPPOINTMENT BY POPULATION. LEVESQUE CAN NOT ALLOW THIS TO
CONTINUE LEST POPULAR ATTITUDES BE REDUCED TO CYNICISM
AND HIS GOVERNMENT LOSE LUSTER OF A NATIONAL CRUSADE.
MCNAMARA

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFERENDUMS, SELFDETERMINATION, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977QUEBEC00191
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770175-0181
Format: TEL
From: QUEBEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770553/aaaabtjj.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ed57be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2504914
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEVESQUE SETS NON-DATE FOR REFERENDUM
TAGS: PINT, CA, (LEVESQUE, RENE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ed57be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009